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Letter dated 9 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 9 April 2018 from Mr. Abdurrahman Mustafa, President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

I write to you with great sadness and frustration following yet another chemical weapons attack perpetrated by the Assad regime in Duma on 7 April: sadness because every Syrian civilian life lost — man, woman or child — is a tragedy for all of us; frustration because Assad's killing is both predictable and preventable.

We warned members of the Security Council repeatedly that failure to confront tyranny with meaningful action only encourages ever more determined tyranny. In March, a Syrian Negotiation Commission delegation addressed an Arria formula meeting at which Hadi al-Bahra urged the Council to enforce its own ceasefire resolution (Council resolution 2401 (2018)). Our message was straightforward: failure to take the necessary measures to enforce the resolution would serve only to feed Assad's conviction that he is free to pursue his military strategy. Unfortunately, Assad continues to be supported by Russia and Iran. And so, the killing continues. The attack in Duma was nothing unusual for Assad — just a minor tactical decision in which laws, morals, norms and the fear of consequence play no part.

The era of impunity must come to an end. Not just because every Syrian life is worth saving, but because the Syrian crisis is a direct threat to global peace and security. The chaos that Assad's violence has unleashed has spawned terrorism that poses a continuous imminent threat to Europe, the United States and the Middle East. The humanitarian burden is stretching much-needed global resources to the breaking point. The refugee crisis is testing the capacity of the region and having a profound impact on the political fabric of Europe. Iran is strengthening its nefarious networks. And Russia goes as far as denying the facts themselves while the evidence is there for all to see.

The Syrian crisis is a global crisis. To sustainably defeat the terror threat, curtail malign influences and alleviate the refugee crisis, the root cause must be addressed. That requires an end to the killing in Syria. We — like many members of the Security Council — are committed to a political solution. But so far there is nobody serious with whom to negotiate. Every round of Geneva talks has confirmed one obvious fact: as long as Assad's military strategy goes unchecked, the regime has no incentive to negotiate and compromise. We agree that there is no outright military solution to the crisis, but Assad, Russia and Iran are pursuing the illusive and deadly option of the military solution. Scores of Syrian civilians, mostly children and women, have just been gassed to death in Duma. Who will protect civilians in Syria?

The Security Council has a special responsibility to ensure the protection of civilian populations in the context of conflict, but it has turned its back on this responsibility for the past seven years. We urge members of the Council to behave as effective protectors of the international order and the basic norms of the international community. We demand that Russia abandon Assad now and cease to make itself an accomplice of each of his crimes. We urge the Council to use all available instruments under the Charter of the United Nations, specifically to adopt a new resolution under Chapter VII that mandates the protection of civilians in Syria now and without delay. Doing so will help to ensure that the ceasefire called for in resolution 2401 (2018) is enforced and will comply with the Council's previous resolutions, such as resolution 2118 (2013), which has been flagrantly violated and paragraph 21 of which calls for further measures. But if Russia chooses to block robust action to protect civilians, individual Member States must shoulder the responsibility themselves. In the coming hours and days, some Member States will be considering their options. We urge them

to seek a strategic outcome by protecting civilians through effective and sustained deterrence. One-off efforts will not end the killing. Nor will a focus only on chemical weapons — that will only tell Assad that his far deadlier illegal and conventional onslaught is permitted. All indiscriminate attacks must be deterred.

By taking meaningful, strategic steps to prevent the further killing of civilians, Member States will create a pathway to resolving the crisis and eliminating its global consequences.

(*Signed*) Abdurrahman **Mustafa**
President
National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary
and Opposition Forces